

SOMERTON U3A

Newsletter 4

July 2020



LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE

Chairman's Message

I hope you are all well and enjoying the greater freedom of movement that the relaxing of some of the lockdown rules has provided to meet up with friends and family.

My sister Sarah and I were able to attend her grandson's tenth birthday party, well, not exactly a party, just six of us! More of a gathering really.

It was lovely to see them and catch up with them over a glass of wine or two, but whatever you do, whoever you meet, stay safe.

Hope to see you soon.

Judi



The Somerton U3A committee will meet on *Zoom* (video conferencing) on 6th July to finalise the details of the AGM. As you know, this is normally held in May at the Edgar Hall but the current crisis means that this year the AGM will be held online.

More details will be sent out to everyone as soon as the committee have finalised them in early July.

Editor's Note

The Newsletter—an Appeal to all Members

We have been very pleased at the positive response we have received about the newsletter and thank those who have contributed.

However, it is disappointing how few articles we are receiving. ...most of what you have been reading in the three editions have been personally commissioned by our editor. There is a limit as to how many arms we can keep twisting!

If you enjoy the newsletter and you would like it to continue, we really need your input.

Send us anything you like; we would love to hear group news. Are you in contact with each other, if so, how? With the gradual relaxing of the rules, many of you will have met

up with friends and family. We would love to hear about it..

Lockdown has been hard for most. Has it affected you? Have you surprised yourself? Have you a greater self-knowledge than before?

Have you taken up any new hobbies or rediscovered old ones? Please tell us and send photos.

Also, please give a shout –out to any particular friends, neighbours or local organisations, who have helped you over the past three months.

We welcome all submissions on any subject, even out of focus photos, so please support the editorial team in this new venture.

Group News



Discussion Group

The Discussion Group is one of, if not the newest group in our Somerton U3A.

We had our inaugural meeting to agree days and time of meeting in September and began our group proper in October 2019. The meetings, until the lockdown began, portrayed a lot of thoughts and opinions and were quite lively. The most interesting thing for me, as leader of the group, was the way in which each discussion diversified into lateral thoughts and ideas.

An example of that was John's chosen subject "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and went like this.

Dandelions, gardens versus fields > general observations > attraction of a mate > how people met.

Something which I had much hoped would happen and sometimes we finished on an entirely different "plain".

We started out in a very informal way so as to be sure to include everyone, being aware that our members encompass all types of personalities.

Maybe if the group decide they would like to, we can be more structured and formal in the future but for the moment we are all enjoying the comradery, the fun and the variety. We also had a serious subject, "Does the U3A meet our needs?" which threw up some thoughts

to pass back to the U3A committee.

December was mince pies and Christmas cake and we had a fun discussion about Christmas. It was interesting to hear how differently we all celebrated it! Memories of times gone by were very varied and the range of thoughts was extensive.

Well done to my group for making it such a great afternoon.

Lockdown of course has put us on hold which is a shame, as we had only really started to gel as a group. I didn't carry on a virtual meeting as some of our members do not have computers and I personally am not wonderful at sorting out a system to enable us to do so.

I hope that the long break won't deter members from attending again once we are able to do so.

I have had a few enquiries from U3A members, re- a more formal debating group and if there were enough people interested, I would be willing to make that happen, with the blessing of the U3A committee.

Dorothy Wadeson, Leader

Editor's note: That discussion sounded really interesting :maybe you could share the group's thoughts in another article

Rediscovering the Delights of French Films During Lockdown

For several years, Reg and I have found TV much easier to watch if we turn on the subtitles. We never switch on before 8.00 pm and usually at 9.00 pm – too busy doing other things before that.

We finally discovered how to use our DVD player after my grandchildren went to Australia and were not around to do it for us (10 years ago) and we have been buying DVDs, but only those which claim to have subtitles. Some turn out to be without any; some have instructions that are very difficult to understand, and some have subtitles for the first few scenes and then none.

Our favourite DVDs include the stories by Marcel Pagnol about his childhood in Provence, 'La Gloire de mon Pere' and 'Le Chateau de ma Mere'. The films are set in the limestone hills north-east of Marseilles and relate to Pagnol's school years 1900-1910. Settings, scenery and costumes are lovely, especially for people who know that

part of France. The acting is superb, with some well-known stars and many local people who took part without training.

There are other Pagnol films which are as good, especially 'Jean de Florette' and 'Manon des Sources', a tragic story set in about 1930 in the same area.

Last year I had a long wait for surgery and another long period of recovery.

I downloaded all Pagnol's books in French onto my Kindle and read them slowly and thoroughly, actually writing down each sentence as I got it straight in my head. At first I had to look up many of the words, but I improved rapidly and can now read Provençal French quite easily. I don't think I could manage French conversation – it does not have subtitles!

Nancy Schooling

Group News



Opera Appreciation led by Enid Thresher and Music Appreciation led by Margaret Schofield.

The first week of every month is a bit of a musical feast. We have opera on the Monday and Thursday and music on the Friday. Three of the music group come to one or other of the opera groups and I go to music.

Since lockdown began we've been doing our own thing music-wise. Both Margaret and I have made new discoveries and I'm sure some of the others will have too with the many opera, ballet and concert performances available on the various platforms.

Knowing that a lot of us listen to Classic FM I made a request. Also knowing that the likelihood of it being played is low (although I have had requests played in the past) I decided to send to those with internet access a video link to the piece requested. Only four people in the three groups don't have internet access. The piece was *Ombra mai fu* from *Xerxes* by Handel – commonly known in its instrumental form as *Handel's Largo*. I chose a particular recording which I'm fond of – the Italian bass Ildebrando D'Arcangelo's recording of 2009. On talking to Margaret we decided it would be a good idea to send out a weekly uplift. So I do, alternating opera with instrumentals. So far we've heard:

The Belfast Hornpipe performed by Celtic Thunder – and Irish/Scottish band of musicians and singers formed in 2007.

A part of scene 1 of *Così fan tutte* by Mozart from Los Angeles Opera

The allegro molto from Vivaldi's Mandolin Concerto RV558 performed by Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante.

I have in mind for the next few weeks:

Mira O Norma – from *Norma* (Bellini) sung by Montserrat Caballe and Fiorenza Cossotto

Eliza's aria by Elena Kats-Chernin (an instrumental piece once used by Lloyds Bank for their TV ad.)

Ah, mes amis – a tenor piece from Donizetti's *La Fille du Regiment* where there are 9 almost consecutive high Cs.

A guitar piece by Milos.

Hopefully it won't be too long before we can meet again and the choices by members lined up for the opera groups are:

Group 1 – *L'Incoronazione di Poppea (Coronation of Poppaea)* by Monteverdi

Group 2 – *Orphée aux Enfers (Orpheus in the Underworld)* by Offenbach

Croquet

By Jenny Lewis

Does the word 'croquet' conjure up for you images of English ladies in Edwardian dress on sunlit lawns? I find, on the contrary, that most people, hearing that I enjoy the game, purse their lips and say, 'Oh, endless arguments and strife', or words to that effect. The game seems to have acquired a reputation for players taking a fiendish delight in driving their opponents' balls into the bushes, and so frustrating their hopes of victory. There is some truth in this but such moves are generally taken in good part, and indeed the motto of my local club 'Fun with Decorum' sums up the friendly atmosphere of the game.

There are in fact two games of croquet: the longer, traditional game (Association Croquet) where each player has to hit his ball through a hoop before progressing to the next, and the shorter, simpler game

called Golf Croquet where all the players move on together to the next hoop after only one of them has succeeded in getting his ball through. In both games you can thwart your opponent by despatching his ball into the distance, and you can also assist your partner, but in Golf Croquet it is a simple one stroke operation, whereas in the traditional game a player may, if he is skilful, hit his ball several times in one go.

In both games there is skill involved in judging distances, aiming for a hoop, guessing what your opponent may be planning, but also of course some degree of luck, especially on a slightly uneven lawn. A gentle slope merely adds to the fun!

I recommend the game as a sociable way to enjoy a summer afternoon out of doors, with some healthy exercise and friendly competition thrown in.

Editor's note: if this has whetted your appetite, maybe soon Somerton U3A could have a croquet group.

Friday Afternoon Book Group Jenny Oliver



Somerton U3A has 2 Book Groupsand the Friday Afternoon Group has been holding *Zoom Meetings*, including with one member who has been stuck (not unhappily) in her second home in Spain since before lockdown!

Zoom has been such an asset to many of us who have managed to fathom the technology, for talking to distant grandchildren and even playing games online as I have done with my grandchildren!

The libraries continue to be closed so we have been downloading books onto Kindle or buying through Amazon or Waterstones.

Hence we have chosen an author rather than one specific title, and last month chose Carol Shields and in our latest meeting included titles by Rosie Thomas. Valerie included her choice of *Larry's Party* by Carol Shields for the previous newsletter.

Between us we also read *The Republic of Love*, *The Stone Diaries* and *Unless*, so I will add a little more about Carol Shields.

She was born in Chicago but married a Canadian and spent the rest of her life in Canada. Sadly she died in her sixties in 2003, but has left a wonderful legacy of books which are really worth reading. Her portraits of individuals and family life are incredibly authentic and definitely of our time.

Unless is a complex tale of a happy Canadian family; the narrator is an author, and she explores the apparent mystery of the eldest daughter, Norah, who has left university and decides to spend her time sitting all day on a street corner with a placard, like a vagabond, and sleeping at night in a hostel. The real reason for her taking up this position is not revealed until very near the end of the book.

The Stone Diaries is the life story of a woman, Daisy Goodwill Flett, born in 1905. This is a fictionalised autobiography chronicling her life throughout the whole century. It is another wonderfully compassionate portrait of her life and all the changes she experiences.

Both of these are well worth reading.

The London Year from Dee Clarke

Back in January 2019, Leo and I were introduced to *The London Year* by Steve Davis who read extracts from it for the History Society's Eyewitness evening. We enjoyed it so much that we ordered the book from Amazon straight away.

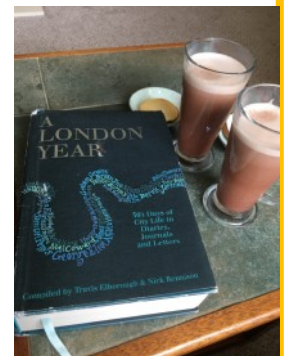
This fascinating book covers *365 Days of City Life in Diaries, Journals and Letters* and was compiled by Travis Elborough and Nick Rennison. It covers the past 500 years and every day there is at least one extract from someone's diary or letters: sometimes a whole page and others just a line: "Breakfasted with James at Johnstone's Coffee House, Charing Cross. Paid for chocolate and muffin. 2.3d." from William Bray's Diary in 1758. When we sit down with our morning hot chocolate, one of us picks up the book and reads that day's offering out loud. There are people we have never heard of before and people who are very famous. Because of the time lapse of a whole year between reading a particular day's offerings, we have forgotten exactly what was said and enjoy it afresh (or is that just indicative of the age we have reached?). Whatever the reason it was well worth the money we spent on it.

Because the views expressed are individual, a gradual picture is built up of what London was like in that particular era, and, where there is more than

one contribution throughout the year from a diarist or letter writer, we get to understand a bit about that character. At the back of the book there is a short summary about each of the contributors which adds to that understanding. Leo, being the actor that he is, manages to read in the imagined accents of those people, which makes it even more enjoyable.

The compilers make no apology that "arguably the topography of this book is as distorted a picture of London as that proffered by Harry Beck's famous Tube map" but it does give a wonderful kaleidoscope of London and life through the ages. There are entries from country dwellers staying in the "large, noisy metropolis"; entries from foreign visitors who comment on the strange habits of the English, particularly the "common people"; and other entries from Londoners exclaiming how they could never live in the countryside away from the busy, cultured life that London has to offer - but they are all referring to the same city!

...Thanks Steve!



Group News



Veg, Cook and Eat

Fresh Pea Risotto

This is a particular favourite of the Veg, Cook and Eat group, sent in by Steve and Mary Davis

Ingredients

50 g butter
1 onion finely chopped
300g cooked fresh peas
1.7 ltrs hot vegetable stock
350gms risotto rice
200ml white wine
25gms parmesan, or vegetarian alternative, grated
2 good handfuls pea shoots
Extra virgin olive Oil to drizzle (optional)



Method

1. Melt the butter in a large pan, add the onion and gently sweat for about 10 minutes until really soft. Meanwhile, put 100g peas into a food processor with a ladleful of stock and whizz until completely puréed.
2. Stir the rice into the onion, increase heat to medium and sizzle the rice for 1 minute. Pour in the wine, then bubble and stir until completely absorbed. Continue cooking like this, adding a ladleful of stock at a time, and stirring continuously until the rice is tender and has a good creamy consistency – this will take 20-30 minutes.
3. Stir in the puréed peas, remaining peas, Parmesan and some seasoning, then turn off the heat and leave to stand for a few minutes. Give the risotto a final stir, spoon into shallow bowls and top with some pea shoots and a drizzle of olive oil, if you like.

Baked Bramley Apple and Almond Pudding: Ingrid Grisedale

This is one of my favourite, very easy to make desserts, summer or winter.

Ingredients:

570g Bramley apples
110g golden caster sugar
50g soft brown sugar
110g soft butter
2 large eggs
110g ground almonds
110g blanched almonds



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C / gas mark 4. You will need an 850ml capacity baking dish, buttered. I prefer the apples with their peel on, cut them into quarters, take the cores out and slice them straight into the baking dish. Sprinkle the apples with a tablespoon of cold water and the brown sugar.
2. Then place the very soft butter and caster sugar in a bowl and whisk them together with an electric hand whisk, before adding the eggs and continue to whisk. After that fold in the ground almonds (it is supposed to be sloppy). Now spoon the mixture into the baking dish and spread out to cover the apples.
3. Finally, scatter the whole almonds all over and place the dish on the centre shelf of the oven for an hour. We love this warm with chilled cream or creme fraiche with a touch of calvados.

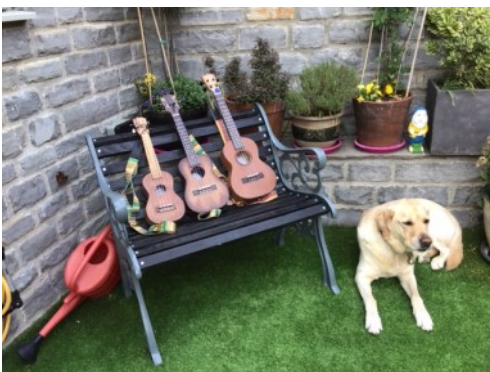
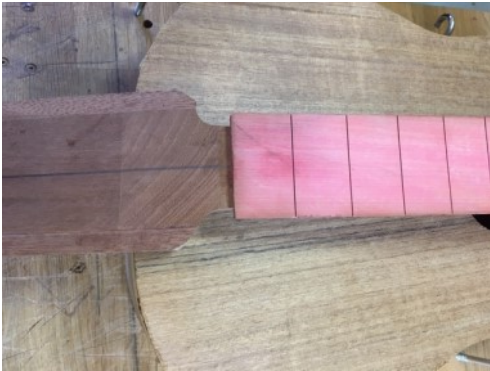
It is also delicious hot or cold cold.

It should serve 6, but I'm sure just 4 people can easily

Music...Uke build

Late last year, about October, I decided (as I live next door to the parish rooms where they practise every Thursday afternoon) I would join the U3A Ukulele group. So I went online and bought myself a fairly basic instrument and booked some lessons with Joshua Horsey who teaches guitar and ukulele in Somerton. After a few lessons I felt ready to join the group in the Parish Rooms, I was made very welcome and although I will never be much of a player enjoy strumming along with them. That was fine. Then along came Covid 19 and lockdown. This meant self isolating, as being 75 and registered blind, it was felt the safest place was to stay indoors. You can only spend so much time 'twanging' away on a ukulele so I decided to see if I could make one.

WARNING :- building ukuleles can be addictive; I have just finished my 10th instrument. The first couple were rubbish but a great learning curve. After half a dozen I was getting quite good results and after the 10th, I think I've got the hang of it. I have a friend in Derbyshire who supplies me with all the exotic woods to make nice looking instruments



Comment...View from the Drawbridge

Hugh Gorrabee-Kydding

I've been reading about this 5G malarkey, creating such a rumpus in Glastonbury. Well, it's dangerous, innit? Stands to reason, all these radio waves you can't see flying about. Can't see viruses neither and we're all rightly scared witless about them. There's more things in heaven and earth than was dreamt of by Horace Bachelor.

Anyway so there's this member of the council's advisory committee recommending this 5GBio-wotsit USB stick which you wear as a "holographic nano-layer catalyser" to protect you from "disturbing frequencies". Sounds impressive. "We use this device and find it useful", he says. Not one to ignore published warnings I was about to get one online – best part of £300, mind – then saw this expert say a £2 USB was just as good, just needs a sticker you can get from a stationers, so I got a job lot of 50 USB's and a sheet of stickers off Ebay for about £100, and strung 'em up like garlic round the front door. Maybe it wards off vampires as well. And viruses. So, I'm quids in, aren't I? Well, nearly 200 quid if I'm honest.

Actually there's one feature of this pandemic that I think deserves a nod. You know we kept hearing about people at the beginning who bought up all the toilet rolls and pasta? Then there was those people having barbecues in the Peak District at the beginning of lockdown. Plus drivers doing a ton in a 30 because there's no-one on the roads. Or fly tipping. Or nicking all the delivery slots from Tesco's. Or having parties. Or driving 100's of miles to Dorset and leaving the place strewn with rubbish, having used the bushes as a toilet. And not just for #1's. Well, it's all THE SAME PEOPLE. I

wouldn't be surprised if a lot of the rubbish was toilet roll wrappings and pasta packets. Lock a few of 'em up and it'd all stop overnight.

I read about the benefits of copper against the virus. So happens I've got a bit of that banding you stick on your hosta pots against slugs, so I've taken to wrapping it round my ankles like bicycle clips to stop the virus climbing my legs. I've got a bit left so I might put some on my wrists like those pneumatic bracelets for aching joints. Maybe make a necklace, too – and I could string one of them USB's on it to 'maintain my own personal 5G biosphere'.

All this 'Track 'n' Trace' they're going on about – you know they say they're 'trailing' an app on the Isle of Wight? Smoke screen. Red herring. It's laughable. Clue's in the testing site. Isle of Wight's so far behind the rest of the world it makes New Zealand look like Silicon Valley. I mean, lovely place but they've only just discovered if you add two notches on a stick to two notches on another stick you've got two sticks. Testing an app? No chance. Track 'n' Trace? That's what this microchip in the vaccine's going to be for. Not just so they can see where you are at all times. There'll be sensors everywhere – on buses, in shops – you'll be scanned like a barcode wherever you go. If you're somewhere you shouldn't be – like Durham – they'll be able to deliver a nasty electric shock from the inside. Or, if you know the right prime minister, give you a pat on the back for following your instincts. If you ask me there's been too much Cummings and not enough going.

Dorothy's Ditty

This virus is making us all quite mad,
I've been writing ditties just as bad!
As Shirley has done about her kettle
Her ditty put David and me in fine fettle!

We could get together to write some more
And leave U3A mag readers in total awe
Cos you and I Shirley are geniuses in our craft
As we are the only ones to be so daft!

Nature ...Summer is Icumin In....

...and I've heard the cuckoo twice already...but what else should we be expecting to see this month? The high level of garden bird activity of spring seems to have come to a halt.



Cuckoo

The parents are either starting another brood or too worn out. The fledglings are nearly independent, and today we watched a baby robin sun-bathing in the seed bed that's supposed to be for annual flowers. There was an interesting confrontation on the water feature between a pied wagtail, wanting to bathe, and a dunnock which turned up for its regular drink, and after several aggressive moves by both, the dunnock was sent away. Outside the garden the greatest excitement has been seeing a red kite prospecting this area.



Dunnock

It seems the insects will probably supply the most action for us. One family that always attracts attention is the damselfly/dragonfly family, and I find their life style interesting. When I see one over the pond my first reaction is which is it? The damselflies have thin matchstick bodies and settle with their wings together over their backs. Dragonflies have broader bodies and perch with wings outstretched. These are



Dragonfly

the adults, so how did they get here? Eggs may

be laid as we watch, in pond vegetation, or dead wood, or sometimes dropped from the air. After hatching, the nymphs can live in the pond from one to three years, depending on species, and are a top predator of anything moving in the water. They have a structure called a basket, which can shoot out and trap their prey. They grow out of their skins several times, so grow a new one and when mature enough to become adults, and usually before mid-day, they emerge from the water, by climbing up plant stems. Like butterflies, they break out of their skins to emerge as a different looking insect, and again, like butterflies, they then have to pump up their wings, and wait for them to dry before they can fly. The used dried skin-case they've emerged from is called an exuvia and can often be found near the pond. It is very delicate but can be handled. The adult will then have two things on it's mind, **food**, the adults are also top predators on any flying insect, and **reproduction**. Males will find a territory and wait for a female to turn up. The damselfly males have a kind of pincer at the end of their tails with which they grasp the female round the neck. The female forms a circle with her body, below him, forming a bicycle wheel shape to reach his sperm with her tail. This is held in a pouch half-way along his body. When fertilised they go off in tandem, and she is lowered into the vegetation or water to lay her eggs on a site which is species specific. They can be in tandem for an hour or more. He keeps his grip on her until the eggs are laid to make sure another male doesn't catch her and chuck his sperm out!

Dragonflies behave in a similar manner, but the time taken to fertilise can be very different in each species. The 'Emperor' mates in mid-air in about 2 seconds, quite violently, whilst others are more like the damselfly.

Photographing these events is fortunately fairly simple as they spend quite some time at one site, and if disturbed, often return to the same leaf or stem. So, if you see a large-ish colourful insect flying over water, see where it lands, find yourself a seat, and enjoy a beautiful part of nature.

Make sure you've a cup of tea to hand!

David Perkins

My Garden

Brian Knighs

I enjoyed looking over other people's gardening efforts as shown in the magazine and regret somewhat that I now do very little outside. However we had an awkward section of grass not doing well so I purchased last August several packets of a bee and butterfly wild garden to replace the difficult piece. From somewhere I got a mass of what looks like wild parsnip which had to be eradicated, after which the intended effect was partially achieved. The local wild bee population has been and is having a great time but to date I have seen no butterflies. However the range of colour and variety is super, especially amongst the marigolds and poppies. This has enabled me to take many quite stunning photographs and this has provided a convenient hobby during lockdown.

I have just started to collect seed for next year to go along with what gets self-sown but I suspect that the product will be quite different from this year as some species will set seed more effectively than others but it means I will have something to look forward to during the winter.

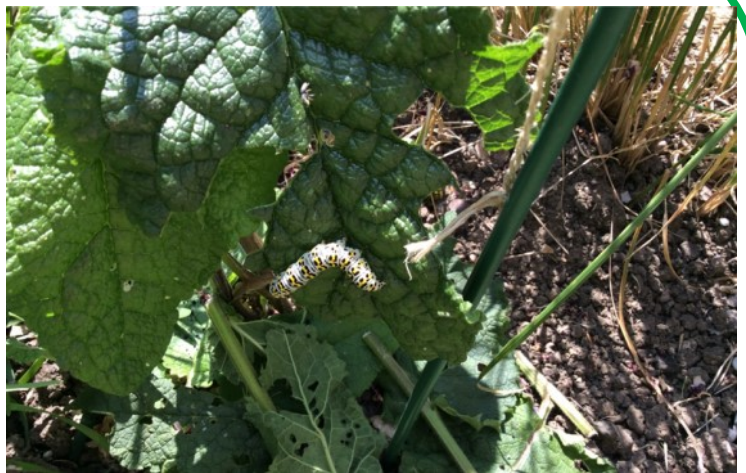
Brian Knighs



Wildflower Mix in Brian Knight's Garden



A Privat Hawk moth



Mullein caterpillar eating verbascum leaves

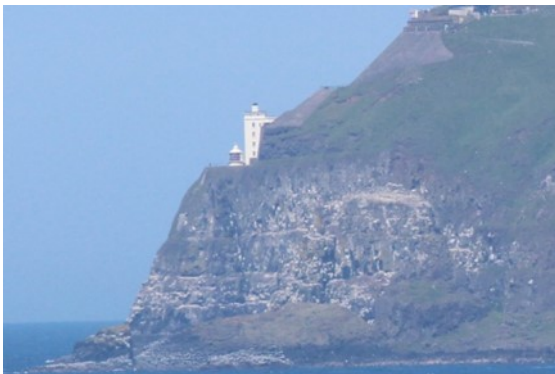
Thanks to Monica Richmond for the photos

My Stay on Rathlin Island report - Dick Carlyon

Aukward ramblings

I hadn't wanted to be here now: I'd wanted to be somewhere in the old normal, not trying to work out whatever the new one is. This time last year I was enjoying a fortnight volunteering with the RSPB on Rathlin, a small island 50 miles north of Belfast and that is where I'd intended to return this summer. This year though, the reserve is closed, there are no visitors and, at the time of writing, the wardens are furloughed. The island's amazing seabird colony will however be carrying on much as usual.

The colony of about 200,000 birds is focused on steep cliffs and galleries near the island's West Lighthouse. This edifice is built half way up the cliffs & is 'upside down', its light being at the bottom whilst the keepers' accommodation and engine room are above. It was first lit in 1919 and is now automated.



Deserted from October to December, January sees the return of the fulmars, with kittiwake, razorbills, guillemots & puffin typically returning in early April. The cliffs echo to the sound of the returning birds, their nest building and mating. The cacophony is indelibly written into the mind, as indeed is the ripe smell that only 200,000 birds can make.



By June, the young are starting to hatch. The tell-tale sign of a puffin arriving back at its burrow with a beak filled with neatly stacked sand eels is an early give away of this. Elsewhere, huddled round close to the cliff face, 200' above sea level, the razorbills and guillemots wait and watch for their eggs to hatch. Then come the young kittiwakes and fulmars, who have the luxury of more robust nests for their fledging.



When it comes to moving on, the kittiwakes and fulmars have it easy – they literally fly from the nest. The 3 auks (puffins, guillemots and razorbills) do it the hard way in July when at typically 3 weeks old, they jump their way down the precipitous cliffs and into the sea. Known as 'jumplings', it is a magnificent, early evening sight. Still unable to fly, they then 'poddle' round learning the finer arts of fishing and self sufficiency before dispersing by September, ready for the cycle to begin again in December.

The wardens produced a video of 2017's summer at the colony. There is some wonderful footage and it is well worth half an hour of your time (possibly with a glass of something?).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUS_jJsM-X8

History...VE DAY

Jean Rattenbury

May 8th 1945 was Victory in Europe Day.

I was 15 years old and to me it was a cheat. It had been announced the day before! That was cheating, it was either over or not on 7th and it wasn't over in Japan and the Far East! Many men were prisoners of war in the most dreadful and inhuman conditions. We had been given a day off school, but that meant little to me as I was swotting for School Certificate exams.

School Certificate was usually taken at 16. It was the exam before there were 'O' Levels. You had to pass at least 6 exams at the same sitting, including English, maths and a language. To go on to any higher education, you needed to pass at least five at credit level for a matric. It was the first external exam we ever had so it was important. I was taking 8 subjects, so it was stressful.

We didn't have a street party in my road but the neighbours with whom we shared the air raid shelter, came into our house, probably with a plate of food to share and a drink. I don't know what that would have been; we only usually had booze at Christmas. Our neighbours seemed to be an elderly couple without children, but may have been like my parents in their 50s. Their house was like ours built in the 30s but they had a big warm kitchen with an oven in the range. They only seemed to live in the kitchen although whole house was properly furnished. Our shelter was different from everybody else's; it was a special, dug in at the bottom between our gardens. It would probably nearly take a bomb to get it out! It was still there 40 years later it was still there when my mother sold the house.

None of my family were in the services. My father had been in the Great War, he survived the Somme, been wounded and then gassed. Ever after he suffered terrible bouts of bronchitis at least twice a year before there were any antibiotics to help him. He wouldn't talk of his experiences but got very angry if my brother pointed even a toy gun at anyone else. When my brother was 18 it was a great relief that he was interested in farming so that he didn't have to go into the services, he could work on farms instead.

For me a bigger cause for celebration than VE Day itself had been the end of the black out a few months earlier. 'The Lights went on again' as in Vera Lynn's song. It was

wonderful!! And I think church bells were ringing too, perhaps had been since Christmas, because there was no longer a threat of invasion and paratroopers dropping from the sky. No longer would searchlights and ack-ack fire disturb the silence of the sky.

The real cause for celebration, for me and many others was VJ Day in August. I was at a farm camp with some teachers and a group from school. Our French teacher's father was a farmer and the harvest had to come in. I remember vividly stuffing big canvas palliasses with straw to make our beds on the wooden floor in the stone granary up the stone steps off the farmyard, right next to the churchyard at the top of the hill. We had to take our own sleeping bags. In my case it was a makeshift affair made with my father's old army blanket, big safety pins and lined with an old sheet. It did get more comfortable as the week went on and it bedded down.

Our job was stacking the barley into stooks. The barley had been cut and bound into sheaves by the reaper and then we had to pick up two sheaves and prop them against each other with 3 or 4 other pairs to make a stook. They were then left standing in the field to dry in the wind and sun until they were ready to be brought in to the barn ready for threshing about October time. Each barley grain was armed with an awn, and each awn was like a needle and they stuck like velcro to your clothes, and they even got into your underwear which was horrible! I think we were paid a nominal shilling a day, but it must have gone on our food. Perhaps we even had to pay to travel there, I don't know.

We were right next to the graveyard I remember the giggles and the ghost stories when we held a midnight feast and eating hoarded sweet ration. We were invited to the vicarage to tea! It was a lovely old house. Just like in an Agatha Christie novel you could step through a huge sash window straight out onto the lawn. I don't know how they catered for us all, perhaps they got special rations in their position as Village VIPs.

VICTORY came suddenly and unexpectedly. Our exam results came through. All my friends were satisfied with what they had got. There was a dance in the village hall. It was all FANTASTIC!

Spot The Celeb

2

..answers



25	EMMELINE PANKHURST
26	MAX MILLER
27	ERNEST RUTHERFORD
28	TED RAY
29	ERIC SYKES
30	W G GRACE
31	DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
32	AUDREY HEPBURN
33	BUSTER KEATON
34	DENIS NORDEN
35	VINCENT PRICE
36	MAGGIE SMITH
37	MARIE CURIE
38	JOANNA LUMLEY
39	BARRY CRYER
40	NIKITA KHRUSHCHOV
41	ALMA COGAN
42	EMILIA FOX
43	PHIL SILVERS SGT BILKO
44	CLEMENT ATTLEE
45	PETER ALLISS
46	SOPHIA LOREN
47	BRIGITTE BARDOT
48	JACK BENNY

KSFCT

The Kirkham Street Field Campaign Trust which, as many of you will know, was set up to purchase this space for the long term benefit of the Somerton residents.

Like all organisations, national and local, they have had to cancel their programme of events, planned for the spring and summer of this year.

However, the committee are looking forward to re-launching their fundraising campaign and are hoping to hold a picnic in the park in August, all being well with the future containment of Covid 19.

For more details visit their website: www.kirkhamstreetfield.org.uk

Margaret Chambers

All articles for the Newsletter send to the editor kaywilliamson46@hotmail.com

Deadline for the August edition...20th July

No entries can be accepted after this date.

Pictures welcome, but keep script brief

Minimum formatting please...no pdfs!

Web site: <https://u3asites.org.uk/somerton/home>